

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Doug's Sloping Restoration

Project No.: 1992-010-00

Project Manager: Jennifer Lord, EWM-4

Location: Bingham County, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.20 Protection of Cultural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes to implement Doug's Sloping Restoration, which is a restoration and habitat improvement project in Bingham County, Idaho. This project specifically enhances habitat for Yellowstone cutthroat trout (*Onchorhynchus clarkii bouvieri*) and tundra swans (*Cygnus columbianus*). The proposed project would consist of:

- 1) Bank and floodplain features would be constructed in approximately 1,500 feet of Spring Creek. The features would use up to 260 small trees (~10 foot long), reinforced with wood piles and backfilled with soil from side channel excavation. The surface of these features would be placed at the bankfull water surface elevation and planted with emergent aquatic vegetation. These features would be 5-15-feet wide along each bank. Approximately 500 feet of stream would be isolated at one time. Construction would start at the downstream end of the project and advance upstream in a step-wise fashion.
- 2) Approximately 2,000 feet of side channels created by excavation and floodplain grading. An additional 23 trees may be added to the side channels and floodplain.

Construction activities are anticipated to last through 2021. Access to the site is available at several points from Broncho Road and all staging and excavated materials would remain on site. The site would be replanted and reseeded with native seed mixture following project construction and through 2022.

These actions would support Bonneville's commitments to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes under the 2020 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the FCRPS on fish and wildlife in the mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries pursuant to the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (Northwest Power Act) (16 U.S.C. (USC) 839 et seq.).

Findings: In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, Jul. 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), BPA has determined that the proposed action:

- 1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- 2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- 3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

/s/ Israel Duran

Israel Duran
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient/CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel February 1, 2021

Sarah T. Biegel Date
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

Proposed Action: Doug's Sloping Restoration

Project Site Description

Activities would occur within the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' Fort Hall Bottoms at approximately river mile 8 of the Spring Creek, about 6 miles northwest of Fort Hall, in Bingham County, Idaho. Access to the site is available from Broncho Road. A tributary to the Snake River, Spring Creek is the largest and ecologically most significant spring-fed stream on the Fort Hall Bottoms. The Fort Hall Bottoms were historically used for grazing which led to degradation of the creek system.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The Shoshone Bannock Tribes conducted historic and cultural resource surveys and consultation for planting sites along Spring Creek. BPA concurred with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' determination of no effect to historic properties.

Notes:

- A monitor would be present to monitor activities and in the event of an inadvertent discovery, stop work in the vicinity and immediately notify appropriate BPA project staff.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary impact to soils and geological resources during construction activities would occur. All ground disturbance would be stabilized and rehabilitated with native planting and seeding.

3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would be expected to cause impacts to plants from construction activities such as feature placement and side channel excavation. Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plants or state special-status species and habitats are not in the immediate project area. The vegetation impacts would be temporary and limited to the construction period. The project area would be seeded and planted with native plants at project completion. Existing vegetation would be salvaged where possible.

4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Activities may have minor, temporary effects on wildlife, due to project activities. However, there are no ESA-listed wildlife or state special-status species or their habitats within the proposed project site or nearby.

5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Yellowstone cutthroat trout are considered 'Imperiled' by Idaho. Other Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed fish or Idaho special-status fish and their habitats are not known to exist in the immediate project area. Although the proposed project activities are designed to improve aquatic habitat conditions for aquatic species over the long term, short-term adverse effects to water quality, fish, and other aquatic organisms would occur during isolation and construction of bank features. Discharge could carry sediments or contaminants to nearby water bodies. The project would handle fish in accordance with state permits. Turbidity-related impacts would be minimized by implementing the appropriate best management practices (BMPs) and adhering to applicable regulatory requirements and permit conditions. Temporary control BMPs could include, but would not be limited to, the use of turbidity curtains, straw bales, etc., and completing work in the dry when possible. Thus potential impacts would be low.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands that currently exist at the project site. However, floodplain grading to create depressions and use loose wood placement on the floodplain are designed to create habitat complexity, this may lead to the creation of wetlands as the project matures.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Restoration activities may result in locally increased groundwater storage through improved floodplain function.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not interfere with current land or recreational use in or near the project area. Additionally, the project would be consistent with and improve the condition of the project area for water quality and habitat values, which would be consistent with tribal values.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Visual quality of immediate project areas would be temporarily impacted during project activities. However, over the long term, the project would enhance the natural appearance of the area and would improve the existing visual value of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Dust and vehicle emissions would increase in the local area during construction activities. These impacts would be temporary in nature and only during normal working hours.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise levels would temporarily increase in the local area during normal working hours as the work occurs.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All applicable safety regulations would be followed during work activities.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:

Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation: NA

Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation: NA

Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.

Explanation: NA

Involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

Explanation: NA

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: This project is part of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' restoration program; all activities are approved as described.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

Signed: /s/ Israel Duran February 1, 2021
Israel Duran, ECF-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient/CRGT